



Report on Dyslexia

This report is intended to provide information regarding statewide efforts of the Exceptional Children Division at the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction to address the needs of students with dyslexia and other reading problems.

Dyslexia is recognized by the North Carolina Public Schools as a subtype of learning disability manifesting itself in reading and spelling difficulties at the word level involving the ability to map sounds onto letters in order to read and spell accurately and automatically. “Word level reading disability is synonymous with dyslexia (Fletcher, Lyon, Fuchs, & Barnes, 2007).”

Within the definition of Specific Learning Disability in the *NC Policies Governing Exceptional Children* (Public Schools of North Carolina Exceptional Children Division, 2014) and the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (Part II 34 CFR Parts 300 and 301 Assistance to States for the Education of Children with Disabilities and Preschool Grants for Children with Disabilities Final Rule, 2006), the term *dyslexia* is included as a subtype of specific learning disability.

As with all disabilities, a student with dyslexia may or may not need special education. The school team must establish the other criteria required for eligibility determination to find the student eligible for special education under IDEA: (1) the disability must have an adverse effect on educational performance and (2) the student must require special education.

1 PREVENTION OF FAILURE: MULTI-TIERED SYSTEM OF SUPPORT (MTSS)

The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction has cast the vision that “Every NC Pre K-12 public education system implements and sustains all components of a Multi-Tiered System of Support to ensure college and career readiness for all students” (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2015). One critical component of MTSS is the practice of providing effective instruction and intervention across tiers of academic and behavioral support to all students. Assessment, progress monitoring and data-driven decision making are all components of an MTSS System that is responsive to the needs of all students. Within MTSS, students who are “at-risk” for reading difficulties, including dyslexia, are identified early through universal screening conducted three times a year. Once students are identified as “at-risk,” data-based problem solving identifies appropriate research-based strategies and preventive intervention begins. Careful progress monitoring and analysis of student performance assesses the student’s response to intervention and assures the student is making progress toward grade-level standards.

For those students whose difficulties persist, the school can make a referral for an initial evaluation to determine if the child has a disability as defined under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and needs special education and related services. At any time, a parent may also request an initial evaluation under IDEA.



2 THE NC STATE IMPROVEMENT PROJECT (NC SIP)

The NC State Improvement Project (NC SIP) has been established in North Carolina for fifteen years. The project aims to improve the quality of instruction for students with disabilities through research supported personnel development and on-site technical assistance for public schools and university teacher education programs. The project goals support improving the performance and success of students with disabilities in North Carolina.

Improving the teaching of students with disabilities is a major focus of NC SIP. There is clear and extensive research evidence supporting that the vast majority of students with disabilities can read and write on grade level. The NC SIP project and a Multi-tiered System of Support strive to ensure students who struggle, including students with dyslexia, benefit from appropriate, research-validated instructional and learning techniques that are effectively employed.

NC SIP Facts:

- 91 districts participate in the NC SIP, focusing on reading and writing. Each of these districts have certified Reading Foundations trainers and coaching support in order to build a systematic infrastructure that supports teachers and sustains best practice.
- 242 certified Reading Foundations trainers who conduct multiple trainings each year throughout the LEAs.
- Over the past three years, over 4,000 special educators, general educators and administrators have completed the 30-hour Reading Foundations course.
- Over the past three years, 3,492 educators in North Carolina were trained in evidence-based reading programs as part of NC SIP grant work.

The Reading Foundations' coursework is based in the principles of instruction for students with dyslexia: systematic, explicit and multisensory. The NC SIP Reading Foundations course has been aligned with the objectives of the Foundations of Reading test required for newly licensed K-6 and General Curriculum special education teachers.

An important element of the Reading Foundations course is the evaluation and selection of reading programs proven to be effective with students with disabilities. Exploration of research-based reading programs and the *Evaluation and Selection of Reading Programs* document, developed by Dr. Rebecca Felton, is extensively reviewed in the Reading Foundations coursework. Some of the reading programs covered include: Wilson, Letterland, Hill Center Methodology, Corrective Reading, Reading Mastery, Language! and S.P.I.R.E.

An annual meeting of the NC SIP sites is held each March. Featured keynote speakers in past years have included Maryanne Wolf, Jan Hasbrouck, Louisa Moats and Nancy Hennessy.

For further information on NC SIP, visit <http://www.ncsip.org/>.



3 NC DPI EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN DIVISION PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES RELATED TO SPECIFIC LEARNING DISABILITIES AND DYSLEXIA

The NC Department of Public Instruction, Exceptional Children Division offers professional development in assessment and evidence-based instructional strategies for students with Specific Learning Disabilities, including students with dyslexia, to educators across the state. The Exceptional Children Division's Program Improvement and Professional Development section has eight (8) Literacy Consultants placed within each region of the state for this purpose. The Division also has a Statewide Consultant for Specific Learning Disabilities and ADHD who also supports programming and instruction for students with Learning Disabilities, including dyslexia.

Appendix A lists professional development offered at the annual NCDPI Exceptional Children Conference and the annual Exceptional Children Summer Institute for the past three years. Additionally, regional and district level professional development is provided by the Division's Literacy Consultants and the Statewide Consultant for Specific Learning Disabilities and ADHD.

4 TEACHER PREPARATION AND LICENSURE

All Elementary Education K-6 initial SP1 licensure applicants (in-state and out-of-state) and Exceptional Children: General Curriculum (K-12) initial SP1 licensure applicants (in-state and out-of-state) are required to pass the *North Carolina Foundations of Reading Test* in addition to the *General Curriculum Test*. The test covers Foundations of Reading Development, Development of Reading Comprehension and Reading Assessment and Instruction (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2015). While the term dyslexia is not specifically used, the components of structured literacy instruction identified by the International Dyslexia Association are included. These components include: phonology, sound-symbol association, syllable types, morphology, syntax and semantics. Also included are the features of structured literacy instruction including explicit, systematic and cumulative instruction (International Dyslexia Association, 2015). Further information can be found at <http://www.nc.nesinc.com>.

The NC State Improvement Project (NC SIP) currently partners with the following Institutes of Higher Education to align content curriculum with Reading Foundations coursework thus improving pre-service teacher preparation and efficacy in teaching reading to students with disabilities:

- University of North Carolina at Charlotte
- East Carolina University
- University of North Carolina at Pembroke
- North Carolina State University

Additionally, the NC General Assembly sets licensure requirements for teachers in the State of North Carolina. NC General Statute §115-C296 (b)(2)(e) (North Carolina General Assembly) requires the following:



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The standards for approval of institutions of teacher education shall require that teacher education programs for all students include the following demonstrated competencies:

1. All teacher education programs.
 - I. The identification and education of children with disabilities.
 - II. Positive management of student behavior and effective communication techniques for defusing and deescalating disruptive or dangerous behavior.
2. Elementary and special education general curriculum teacher education programs.
 - I. Teaching of reading, including a substantive understanding of reading as a process involving oral language, phonological and phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.
 - II. Evidence-based assessment and diagnosis of specific areas of difficulty with reading development and of reading deficiencies.
 - III. Appropriate application of instructional supports and services and reading interventions to ensure reading proficiency for all students.

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